

**SOUTH DAKOTA DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
SPECIAL EDUCATION PROGRAMS**

**Community Connections Incorporated
Continuous Improvement Monitoring Process Report 2004**

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Dates of On Site Visit: July 27, 2004

Date of Report: August 11, 2004

This report contains the results of the compliance review completed by the Special Education Programs. The report addresses six principles – General Supervision, Free Appropriate Public Education, Appropriate Evaluation, Procedural Safeguards, Individualized Education Program and Least Restrictive Environment. Each principle is rated based on the following scale:

Promising Practice	The district/agency exceeds this requirement through the implementation of innovative, high-quality programming and instructional practices.
Meets Requirements	The district/agency consistently meets this requirement.
Needs Improvement	The district/agency has met this requirement but has identified areas of weakness that left unaddressed may result in non-compliance.
Out of Compliance	The district/agency consistently does not meet this requirement.
Not applicable	In a small number of cases, the standard may not be applicable for your district/agency. If an item is not applicable, the steering committee should briefly explain why the item is NA. Example – no private schools within the district boundaries.

Principle 1 – General Supervision
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General supervision means the school district and the agency's administrative responsibilities to ensure federal and state regulations are implemented and a free appropriate public education is provided for each eligible child with a disability. The specific areas addressed in principle one are child find, referral procedures, children voluntarily enrolled by parents in private schools, students placed by the school district, improving results through performance goals and indicators (assessment, drop out, graduation), professional development, suspension and expulsion rates.

Meets Requirements

The reviewers found Community Connections, Inc. meets the requirements in all areas of general supervision. Two student files were reviewed at the agency. Documentation was found in both that showed continuing involvement with the sending school districts in order to provide special education services to the students. The school districts are responsible for three year reevaluations and the agency is responsible for medical and life skills testing.

Principle 2 – Free Appropriate Public Education

All eligible children with disabilities are entitled to a free appropriate public education in the least restrictive environment. The specific areas addressed in principle two are the provision of FAPE to children residing in group homes, foster homes, or institutions, making FAPE available when a child reaches his/her 3rd birthday and providing FAPE to eligible children with disabilities who have been suspended or expelled from school for more than 10 cumulative days.

Meets Requirements

It is the responsibility of school districts to provide a free appropriate public education to students from birth to age 21 within their attendance boundaries. Community Connections, Inc. also functions as the service provider to students with disabilities that are placed by the school districts. The agency meets all requirements with respect to the requirements of a free appropriate public education (FAPE).

Principle 3 – Appropriate Evaluation

A comprehensive evaluation is conducted by a team of knowledgeable staff, which also includes parental input. A valid and reliable evaluation will result in effective individualized education programs for eligible students. The specific areas addressed in principle three are written notice and consent for evaluation, evaluation procedures and instruments, eligibility determination, reevaluation and continuing eligibility.

Meets Requirements

The agency meets all requirements with respect to appropriate evaluation. Consent is consistently received; however, timelines are not consistently met (see below). All evaluations reviewed in the student files are sufficiently comprehensive to plan the students' educational programs.

Needs Improvement

Through interview and a review of student records, the monitoring team agrees the 25 day timeline for evaluations is not consistently met. Parents are informed concerning evaluations and give initial consent; however, evaluations are not completed within the 25 day timeline. The team provided the agency with samples of prior notice consent for evaluations. The agency agreed to send the notice and abide by the 25 day timeline.

Principle 4 – Procedural Safeguards

Parents of children with disabilities have certain rights available. The school district and the agency makes parents aware of these rights and makes sure they are understood. The specific areas addressed in principle four are adult student/transfer of rights, content of rights, consent, written notice, confidentiality and access to records, independent educational evaluation (IEE), complaint procedures, and due process hearings.

Meets Requirements

Community Connections, Inc. meets all requirements with respect to procedural safeguards. The team concluded that parents are informed of their parental rights. Parents are informed of all relevant consent information in their native language. Parents have the opportunity to access and inspect applicable student records. The agency has policies and procedures to prevent unauthorized disclosure of personally identifiable information pertaining to children with disabilities. The agency has procedures within the comprehensive plan which meet the requirements of surrogate parent appointments. The agency's comprehensive plan has policies and procedures for responding to complaint and due process hearings.

Principle 5 – Individualized Education Program

The Individualized Education Program (IEP) is a written document for a child with a disability that is developed, reviewed and revised by the IEP team, which includes the parent. The specific areas addressed in principle five are IEP team, IEP content, transition components for secondary IEPs, annual reviews, transition from early intervention program, and IEP related issues.

Promising Practice

The agency should be commended for the transition components included in the Individual Service Plan (ISP/IEP). The two student files reviewed contained opportunities for community involvement. Both students have jobs within the community. These jobs include passing out flyers in the community for local businesses, working in a grocery store, working in a rest home, and assisting with the agency car wash. Client's apartments are located throughout the community which helps foster a sense of belonging. Clients also participate in community volunteer work which has included making poppy crosses for the Veterans fundraiser.

Meets Requirements

Community Connections, Inc. meets requirements with respect to annual IEP meetings, IEP membership, IEP content, transition components for secondary IEPs and IEP related issues. The agency invites the appropriate members. Contacts are made with the parents to secure their involvement as well.

Principle 6 – Least Restrictive Environment

After the IEP is developed or reviewed, the IEP team must decide where the IEP services are to be provided. Consideration begins in the general education classroom for school age students. The specific areas addressed in principle six are placement decisions, consent for initial placement, least restrictive environment procedures, preschool children, and LRE related issues.

Meets Requirements

Community Connections, Inc. meets all requirements with respect to least restrictive environment. The reviewing team toured the facility and observed the programs available, such as contracted work for local businesses and the agency car wash. Placement for the students is appropriate for their needs at this facility.